

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 11, 1997**

PROJECTS REVIEWED

WSCTC Expansion Project

Convened: 1:30 PM

Adjourned: 5:15 PM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Barbara Swift, Chair
Moe Batra
Carolyn Darwish
Gail Dubrow
Robert Foley
Gerald Hansmire
Jon Layzer
Rick Sundberg

STAFF PRESENT

Marcia Wagoner
Peter Aylsworth
Vanessa Murdock

091197.1 Project: **WASHINGTON STATE CONVENTION AND TRADE CENTER
EXPANSION**

Phase: Pre-design

Presenters: Matt Lampe, Executive Services Department
Chuck Hartung, Convention Center
Chris Eseman, LMN Architects
Mark Hinshaw, LMN Architects
Kenichi Nakano, Nakano Dennis Landscape Architecture
Gerry Gerron, G2 Architecture
Mark Ludtka, Callison Architecture

Attendees: Beverly Barnett, Seattle Transportation
Ron Bolstad, LMN
Michael Brown, Councilmember Staff-Mciver
Ted Caloger, G2 Architecture
John Christison, WSCTC
David Craven, Design Review Board
Shane Dewald, Seattle Transportation
Patrick Doherty, DCLU
Ryan Durkan, Hillis Clark
G Heron, RC Hedreen Co.
Mark Johnson, Design Review Board
Joyce Kling, City Council Central Staff
Kris Kofoed, Planning Commission
Vince Lyons, DCLU
Dan McGrady, Councilmember Staff-Drago
Ethan Melone, OMP
Anindota Mitra, LMN
Donald Nelson, Seattle Transportation
Janet Oslund, DCLU
Clint Pehrson, Allied Arts
John Shaw, DCLU
Beverly Sperry, WSCTC
Karin Swope, Hillis Clark
Hiro Takahashi, Seattle Transportation
Joe Taskey, Seattle Transportation
David Thyer, RC Hedreen Co.
Cliff Traisman, Councilmember Staff-Choe
John Turnbull, Design Review Board
Gerry Wilhelm, Seattle Transportation
Linda Willanger, WSCTC

Time: 3 hr. 45 min. (0.3%)

Summary:

The Washington State Convention and Trade Center (WSCTC) expansion project began in 1993 and underwent a feasibility study in 1994. Out of that study came the identification of a need for larger contiguous space than currently exists. Two alternatives were explored by the design team and taken through the EIS process; an expansion to the east and an expansion to the north. During

the EIS, an urban design team was contracted to work with the design team in developing the two alternatives. At the end of the EIS the north alternative was selected to be further developed. There were a number of factors involved in this decision, the key issues being financial differences between the north and east alternatives related to the potential for co-development. The north alternative would have a lower impact on housing and the potential for a special development which, due to the consolidation of ownership, could create a foundation for real urban design in the area. Out of the urban design study came the current north alternative including the glass galleria and proposed bridges. Developers were then selected for the various pieces of the project. The proposed WSCTC expansion project is now nearing the end of the design development phase.

The project has four major components; the existing Convention Center, a new exhibition hall and Convention spaces, a hotel co-development, and an office tower. The proposed project would require five street vacations; two aerial street vacations over Pike Street, one aerial street vacation over 8th Avenue, one aerial vacation over the alley between 8th and 9th Avenue, and one full vacation of the alley between 7th and 8th Avenue. The street level will primarily have retail spaces on 7th Avenue, 8th Avenue, 9th Avenue, and Pike Street, with the hotel lobby and retail on Pine Street. These retail spaces continue along Pike Street and wrap around the corner of 8th Avenue and continue through the tunnel space along the east side of the covered area of 8th Avenue.

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Plan graphic of Convention Center Expansion and Co-development

Convention Center Component

The Convention Center component of the project is divided between the building and the Pike Street galleria. The floor elevation of the existing Convention Center's main exhibition space and south lobby determines the floor elevation of the new exhibition space, which will be across Pike Street to the north, the galleria space, and the truck crossing, at approximately four stories above the street level. The corner lobby is a shared zone between the Convention Center and the proposed office tower with escalators along the edge of Pike Street.

There is a new entrance at the SE corner of 7th and Pike Street intersection. A continuous canopy line extends from the spandrel line of the Act Theater down 7th Avenue to Pine Street, linking the entrances of the office tower and the Convention Center. The corner entrance to the shared lobby space was developed as a transparent corner allowing a forecourt at Pike in front of the galleria space. The transparent nature of the lobby on Pike Street allows interior activity to be visible from the sidewalk. The 7th Avenue facade of the lobby space has three large glass bays, two mark the office tower entrance and visually tie the tower to the base, while the third marks the corner lobby entrance. The corner entry, with its pre-function space, provides the entry to the new exhibit space north of Pike Street; the only convention center contact at the sidewalk north of Pike Street is for emergency exit.

The glass galleria cover is held back from the 7th Avenue facades and echoes the 30-foot structural grid of the buildings. The galleria roof is 120 feet high at the apex of the arch and covers most of the block on Pike between 7th and 8th Avenue. The building is divided by structural bays with panels and bay windows between. These are designed to be set at an angle to give more visual interest and rhythm to the facade. The solid, upper level panels between the retail store fronts and the convention center level will be removable to accommodate future space uses. The columns are delineated with pre-cast concrete, using two color tones—darker at the base and lighter above.

The Northeast block will be developed by the convention center with the top level containing a portion of the new exhibit hall and the loading dock to support the new hall. The loading dock is connected to the existing loading dock by the truck bridge allowing the existing truck routing and management system to be used for the expansion, which keeps the significant volume of large tractor-trailers out of the downtown street grid. The truck bridge will be an open steel frame. The underside of the truck bridge will be lit to highlight the open steel frame design.

Underneath the 8th Avenue tunnel the ceiling expresses the same structural rhythm as the wall. The design team presented 2 alternatives for the ceiling treatment, both are combined with dramatic lighting ideas and attempt to create a dynamic space. Underneath the pedestrian/galleria bridge and truck bridge the ceiling will have a coffered treatment also with dramatic lighting.

In developing the streetscape, the design team has looked at the downtown area, surrounding street uses, and the Pike Street Improvement Project. The design team has attempted to follow suggestions in the Pike Street Improvement Project document, realizing that the Convention Center area could become a strong urban design district, stretching beyond Pike street to the adjacent areas.

The concentration of improvements and pedestrian enhancements will occur along Pike Street. The galleria space at Pike Street will have a similar scale and grandeur to the galleria in Milan, the primary difference being three lanes of traffic through the center. The design teams are working on small scale treatments in an effort to develop a level of detail at the street level which creates a lively, interesting streetscape. The level of night-time activity has greatly increased in

the area due to the new cineplex and entertainment retail, providing a more lively atmosphere on the street.

The curb line has been moved outward creating 27 foot wide sidewalks and eliminating the existing parking stalls. The four car pullouts for short term use will remain at each side of the street on Pike under the pedestrian/truck crossing bridge. The sidewalks are divided into three zones. The outer zone next to the street will have loose tables and chairs, separated from traffic by a network of bollards, planters, street trees, and streetlights. The middle zone will be 15 feet of clear space for pedestrian traffic. The inner band is reserved for planters or small retail uses. The paving continues the 30-foot column spacing of the building with a band across the sidewalk, organizing the sidewalk into 30-foot modules. The paving will have a 2-foot by 2-foot grid at the edges with a 5-foot by 5-foot grid in the middle pedestrian zone. Proposed streetlights are the two globe Seattle standard matching Pine Street and the proposed bollards could be conceptually similar to the Chief Seattle base.

Hotel Component

The hotel component is located at the corner of 7th Avenue and Pine Street. The hotel will have entrances and support spaces for the Convention Center, which occupy the hotel footprint at the level of the new exhibition spaces. Above this support level will be 21 floors of guest rooms and below it will be meeting rooms, restaurants, retail spaces, and the hotel lobby at the street level. There will also be parking for the hotel and short-term parking to support retail in the area. Given the smaller size of program elements, a finer scale to the hotel facades can be achieved, which is not possible on the adjacent volume of parking levels and Convention spaces.

The hotel tower is approximately twice as tall as the Roosevelt Hotel across the street, which had a strong influence on the design. The facades are broken into distinct bays and strong vertical elements. The building's scale is further diminished by introducing horizontal planes which break the column bays into finer elements and by stepping the building back near the intersection. The corner of the building is delineated by a vertical glass element crowned with an illuminated glass crystal. Due to programmatic requirements, the 7th Avenue facade has little opportunity for animation. The design team has tried to break down the facade into smaller units or bays similar to those used on the Convention Center expansion. The bay panels have a gentle curve outward on the facade above the street level. The retail space at the corner of 7th Avenue and Pike is a prominent visual element, mostly of glass, that curves gently into the galleria space, creating a interesting retail entrance. The tenant of this space will have interesting signage and create additional night life in the area. At the corner of 8th Avenue and Pine Street, a vertical separation of the wall planes de-emphasizes the massive, box-like quality of the building and allows for a ventilation intake panel.

Office Tower Component

The office tower consists of 16 floors of office space, totaling 300,000 square feet, located above the new Convention Center lobby on the McKay site, at the corner of 7th Avenue and Pike Street. The lobby space is shared between the office building and the Convention Center with additional office tower entrances concentrated on the 7th Avenue side. The Pike Street tower facade is recessed back to give the Pike Street galleria more prominence. The 7th Avenue facade steps back at the corners and allows the office tower facade to visually register with the large bay windows at the base of the building. A canopy over the seventh avenue entrance wraps around the corner under the Pike Street cover at the height of the door headers on the Act Theater.

Clarification Questions and Comments:

- Lyons:** At the Design Review Board (DRB) meeting, board members expressed a desire for more transparency or art treatment at the office lobby stair exit doors and a stronger relationship between the office and the street.
- Turnbull:** One problem the DRB had at the reviews was a limited view of the project. The presentations were so focused on small areas that the board didn't get to see the overall project.
- Doherty:** There was a strong feeling of the board that the lobby entrance needs a strengthened and enhanced presence.
- Sundberg:** What is the Design Review Board looking for?
- Lyons:** The hotel demonstrates the kind of street connection they are looking for.
- Doherty:** The office tower seems isolated on a podium. The board wanted the office tower and the base to be more interwoven with a bolder presence on 7th Avenue and a greater contribution to the sidewalk improvements by the private developments.
- Dubrow:** The entry sequence is still schematic and I wonder where the emphasis is. The WSCTC Urban Design Principles seem to be at odds with the DRB guidelines. The idea of a shared lobby space is not strengthened by expressing the office tower entrance and the Convention Center entrance so differently in terms of materials and spaces.
- Eseman:** That is a dilemma caused by the program requiring two separate entrances for the two functions.
- Darwish:** Could the 8th Avenue facade of the hotel be treated similarly to Pike Street?
- Gerron:** We are currently looking at that possibility.
- Darwish:** What will attract the general public to the Pike Street galleria space?
- Hinshaw:** The primary attraction will be the retail uses along Pike Street in the galleria space as well as those along 7th Avenue. The area around the Convention Center is quickly becoming a destination for people all over the city due to the new movie theater, Gameworks, and so on. There are growing numbers of pedestrians in the area late into the evening because of these retail and entertainment additions.
- Darwish:** Are there entertainment opportunities on the street for people who don't necessarily want to spend money for it?
- Hinshaw:** There will be a major art piece inside the glass corner of the lobby. The public atrium space of the existing Convention Center will continue to display art exhibits. The streetscape will contain opportunities for art in the design of bollards, tree grates, etched doors, and other details. Inlaid plaques and window displays could also be venues for artistic display.
- Layzer:** Do the retail uses on Pike Street extend up to 9th Avenue? It seems like a blank box that sits under the loading bridge. Are there other thoughts on uses for that space?
- Hartung:** The ground floor will be occupied by retail. We are building in the capacity for more uses above, but don't want to limit the potential uses.
- Batra:** Why would the tables and chairs be placed at the sidewalk edge rather than the building edge?
- Hinshaw:** They will not be right next to the street, but will be screened by bollards, street trees, and planters at the curb. These elements will create a series of spaces within the 30 foot bays of the paving and street trees.

- Foley:** You show both a square corner and a diagonal corner in different drawings, is one of these the current form of the lobby corner?
- Eseman:** That is still a hot topic of discussion. We have tried various alternative forms at the corner. The square corner seems best to strengthen the forecourt space of the galleria, while the diagonal front creates a sidewalk area jumbled between the galleria forecourt and an entrance space for the lobby.
- Doherty:** What could the office tower add to the Pike Street improvements in terms of mitigation?
- Hinshaw:** Increased funding from the office tower could raise the level of finishes and materials at the street level. The bollards, tree guards and grates, and planters could be customized, possibly becoming an area for artistic representation.
- Dubrow:** The key distinction in this discussion is, 'could be' versus 'will be'.
- Taskey:** The street improvements and the general streetscape may become a distraction to passing motorists. Will there be any mid-block street crossings between 7th and 9th Avenue?
- Hinshaw:** Not at this point. The street crossings will occur as general intersection walks at 8th Avenue and at the west side of 9th Avenue. Any additional crossings would have to be studied by the City. We think that traffic will tend to slow down through the area.
- Lampe:** Perhaps you could move the walk under the bridge, providing a covered walk between the Convention Center and the Metro bus tunnel.
- Barnett:** The public nature of this project, being a state facility, combined with a private partner, the office tower owner, creates a jumbled overlap of different regulatory layers. Are the street improvements intended to serve as mitigation for the vacations? The proposed level of improvements, or mitigation, does not seem to offset the great impact of the project on the area. I question the level of public benefit in exchange for the requested street vacations.
- Dewald:** How is water made accessible for flushing the street and sidewalks, for cleaning the glass covering, and watering the trees? Is there a way to capture rainwater from the roof and store it for use at the street level? Given the limited sunlight and rainwater, perhaps trees should be replaced with other planting choices.
- Hinshaw:** The trees will be honey locusts, similar to those used around the Federal Building, which allow filtered light through to the sidewalk.
- Lyons:** The use of landscaping on the facades of the existing Convention Center was successful. Are there opportunities for similar treatments, possibly outdoor spaces or balconies, on the expansion, especially under the galleria space?
- Eseman:** The lack of upper-level landscaping is primarily caused by programmatic requirements. There just isn't room for outdoor spaces above the street level. We made a conscious effort to put the landscaping at the street level.
- Hinshaw:** We have not yet found an example, or prototype, of a covered street with both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

General Discussion:

- Pehrson:** The design team is correct in saying that there isn't a precedent for a project like this. The galleria in Milan is not even close. A case may be made that the scale of this arch is similar to that in Milan, however, the relationship of the arch to the

space it creates is vastly different. The building facade in Milan's galleria is crafted, full of life and texture, while the facade of the Convention Center's galleria is a direct antithesis. The galleria in Milan was made by people while the Convention Center galleria appears to be made by a machine. If one asked people in Seattle for an example of problematic blank walls, the first would be the Sheraton Hotel and the second would be the Convention Center. The Convention Center expansion has 7 ½ city blocks of relentless marching bays with little or no texture, life, or craft in them. The bay design is not particularly interesting and it is unknown what will be behind those windows. This project is analogous to an 800 lb. Sumo wrestler sitting down in the middle of a little, dainty jewelry store. The shoppers keep circling around, looking at the diamonds and the Rolex watches, but nobody talks about the Sumo wrestler sitting in the middle of the room. I care greatly about street trees and urban improvements, but these are beside the point in dealing with this project. This project is an 800 lb. Sumo wrestler sitting down in the middle of one of the most sensitive neighborhoods we have in the retail core.

Melone: It would be useful to use the work from the Pine Street Advisory Task Force and the Pike Street Improvement Project for guidance in developing the streetscape. One of the recommendations the Task Force made to Council was that Pike and Pine Streets be made Green Streets. They are not in the code as Green Streets as of yet. The Pike Street Improvement package could be used as a sort of menu of options to choose from. The Ballpark Pedestrian Improvement Plan could also be used for a broader scope of possible urban design elements.

Doherty: The ultimate question is, what level of improvements would the Commission recommend that the City Council require for mitigation of these street vacations? Would it be in the area of improved attraction to the space, improved accessibility, or artwork programs? Not artistically designed tree grates, but actual art designed for display.

Nelson: Is there concern for the galleria space becoming a bird habitation? It could be both positive or negative, but is anyone trying to prevent it?

Eseman: That has been raised as an issue of concern. Another issue is how they will clean the glass cover. We have intended that it would be cleaned similarly to glass office towers in the city. They are both technical questions we'll have to address.

Nelson: I noticed a drive at the entrance to the hotel for passenger drop-off. I am wondering how transit users would approach the building.

Gerron: They will basically be coming from three different directions; from the Convention Center transit station, Capitol Hill transit down Pine Street, and downtown transit up Pike Street

Commission Discussion:

Darwish: The Convention Center doesn't seem strongly committed to quality street improvements.

Layzer: I agree that there seems to be a lack of commitment. Some street improvements have been explained, but there seems little commitment to those improvements. Although the galleria structure is a significant public amenity, there still needs to be a commitment to high quality finishes at the street level, and a filling out of that

program at the street level. A high degree of quality is something I assumed was a requirement of the vacations.

Hansmire: I am concerned with the emphasis of detail at only the street level. The ideas for the undersides of the overpasses, developed with dynamic lighting, could become really interesting. You could put too much emphasis at the street level, and lose the rest of the space. The whole galleria space along Pike Street needs to have a more 3-dimensional quality or perspective. I would like to see the ideas that were started on the coffered ceilings be developed and used to create character and depth and life to the space. The sidewalk improvements don't need to be more than those required by the code, allowing the actual improvements to address the entire space under the arch, not only the street level.

Sundberg: I want to reinforce the need for accessibility of the space. The Convention Center is asking for a lot of square footage in vacations. The intersection at 7th and Pike seems to be an echo of the intersection at the Market. We have the opportunity to develop this intersection as a compliment to the opposite end of Pike Street at the Market. The public nature of the street needs to be identified more strongly, without being too complicated. An echo could be created from one end of Pike to the other end.

Dubrow: The vacations are motivated by the desire to connect the 4th floor exhibition spaces and the complications of bringing trucks across the street at the 4th floor. These desires are the forces which have created this mega-complex that, under ordinary conditions, would be considered bad urban design in the first place. In a fundamental way, the vacations are allowing a scale of development that is problematic in this location, all of which is under a galleria that isn't a pedestrian place, but actually has vehicles running through it. The cost of the Convention Center developing alternative schemes for the truck loading and for connecting the 4th floor exhibition spaces is pretty great. Given that, I think the current design really underestimates the cost and value of providing public amenities to compensate for all the factors of scale. It's shocking that the portion of the project which has the lowest amount of investment has the most public visibility and usability—the streetscape. The design as it stands undervalues what is needed in terms of the level of refinement and detail. The proposed design has generic level of pedestrian amenities which merit a greater investment in the quality of materials that will guarantee liveliness. The entry into the public lobby is still a weak point. The galleria is lovely, but the public entry into the facilities needs more celebration.

Foley: The entry into the Convention Center needs to be the dominant entry at the intersection of 7th Avenue and Pike Street. Right now, it gets lost between the office tower entrance and the galleria. It needs a stronger expression rather than relying on transparency. The galleria is the most expressive element in the scheme. That same level of expression needs to be developed in the corner entry to the Convention Center.

Johnson: The Design Review Board also desires more clarity of west entries. The designers may not have the freedom to break the rhythm created on the west facade at the corner due to the structural needs of the interior. It seems like there is some room to play with the corner, maybe to pump it up some.

Dubrow: At this point, the corner entry responds more to the interior than to the exterior. Look at the entry from the outside in, think about the approach and the scale of the building at the entry.

Swift: Being at the end of the design development phase, which usually means identifying what you will move forward with, I am concerned about the development of the public realm. I am concerned that your intent and commitment to a rich public place has not been followed through upon yet. The building has made some extraordinary strides with the development of interesting soffits and lighting. I keep looking for “the richly developed” streetscape zone, but I don’t see it. The intersection at 7th and Pike Street is a very important intersection because it signals the beginning of the Convention Center district. Pedestrians need to be able to take over the space at some times. The treatment of the public realm must move beyond what I have seen.

Layzer: The half block between 8th and 9th reads like a box under the loading dock. 8th Avenue seems like a dark box with little possible activity.

Sundberg: The entry is not strong enough, the building corner and the intersection need development, and the public realm needs further development as a public place.

Dubrow: I am looking for a greater investment at the streetscape in the level of materials and textures.

Swift: The Design Guidelines will help in the clarification and expansion of our comments.

Foley: The upper levels of activity in the galleria space need to be strengthened.

ACTION: The Commission appreciates the comprehensive nature of the presentation and hopes that continued discussion will help the project and design effort to better fit into the surrounding urban fabric. The Commission strongly supports the tunnel and soffit lighting ideas at 8th Avenue and at Pike Street. However, the Commission can not support the street vacations unless the following areas of concern were adequately addressed:

- development of a Pike Street approach that provides a civic identity,
- development of the corner entry as the principle entry with a stronger civic identity and a clear commitment to a shared lobby with the office tower, and
- a greater investment in the design and development of the public realm.

The Design Commission has concerns about the current lack of sufficient financial commitment to achieve a level of design commensurate with the scale of this civic project. The Commission commits to review the Urban Design Principles developed by the Design Review Board, the Design Team, and the WSCTC, and offer further comments as necessary.